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The compensations of youth, middle age, and old age, 1931.

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THE COMPENSATIONS OF YOUTH, MIDDLE AGE AND OLD AGE

LECTURE GIVEN AT THE TEMPLE
SUNDAY, JAN. 11th
1931
BY
RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

To the thoughtful man or woman, every stage of life has its compensations, for every stage of life brings its own peculiar experiences and at every stage we may re-begin to live a new life on a different plane.

Human life has its seasons just as nature has its seasons. And each season has its own charms and its own seeming beauty.

One need not dwell long of course, upon the compensations of youth, for it is generally understood that youth is that period in human life which enjoys most what we call 'the blessing of life.'

In the first place youth is blessed with unbounded hope and hope is the zest of life. Hope is the marrow of living. In youth people are not yet aware of the inevitable limitations of life. Every obstacle is assumed to be surmountable and every ambition attainable. In youth our dreams are not yet harnessed or broken by experience and our inner self, our ego, is not yet shackled by social restraints.

When we are young we believe that we can choose any road we want to travel on. There are choices, - we may choose, and even if the road were hard, we possess the strength adequate for the effort.

Youth too, is blessed with buoyancy. Young men when they are defeated in their particular objective will express a profound

despair only for the moment. The next moment they are plunging on again. There is a resilience and electricity to the emotional life of youth that one does not find in later life. The warm blood of youth has a way of thawing all the chill despairs of life. So youth in the words of the poet is "Ceaseless aspiring and ever in motion."

And then youth too, has this advantage; that it is too much engrossed in the business of living to intellectualize much about life. Youth lives and experiences the most of life without carving these emotions into shreds of analysis and criticism. Youth does not submit life to a sort of an intellectual microscope, for the microscope unfortunately reveals the rough texture of existence.

Youth has what Emerson called the "Gift of divine generalization," - overlooks the unpleasant details, sees only the sweet side and therefore youth is the age of lyric poetry.

Every age has its poetry. But youth is particularly the age of lyric, romantic poetry. It is the age of the "Song of Songs."

And youth has a way of idealizing life. I do not mean falsifying life. Life is what we make it. Each age makes its own life. Youth makes life ideal, a legend of budding, blossom, becoming, - as perhaps it was meant to be in the mind of the Maker, Himself.

Commonplaces are commonplaces only to commonplace people. Youth has not yet reached the stage where things are commonplace. Youth can still see the glow where other people see only the actuality. That's a blessing.

Youth has enthusiasms. We desire enthusiasm in youth. We are a bit fearful of it, in middle aged people or old age. Youth has the enthusiasm to overleap mountains. Sometimes they break their necks but sometimes that enthusiasm does carry them over the highest mountain ranges. And nothing gives a rarer satisfaction to life than an act completed in superb abandonment into which you have thrown all the passion of your will. That sort of an act is possible in youth. Youth is still unshackled, unvictimized, not pigeon-holed in a definite job or profession or calling. It is not curbed, as all of us become curbed as we get older. And youth can still be stirred to fine impulses, noble generosity, magnificent loyalty. Youth can also be very cruel because it is thoughtless. Youth can be impulsively tyrannous. And that's why parents must not permit youth to exploit them and youth must not exploit their parents. This is the age when young people tyrannize over the old. They know more than their parents do and some parents try to get out of the way of their children all the time. They do not want to interfere. The children know more. They are modern. It is a foolish age and parents particularly are extremely foolish in this generation. These young people who are now exploiting their parents will be much smarter when they become parents.

Youth, then, to summarize, is a period of preparation. Spring is the time of plowing, sowing. Life all about is stirring. There is a life-ferment. The sap of life creeps up warm, rich, sweet. Youth is the time for laying foundations for one's later life, - foundations in

physical well-being, foundations in sound habits of thought and action, foundations in fine friendships. The youth who wastes his youth or who permits himself foolishly to become sated in youth has many dull wasted years ahead of him. Nature has a way of keeping strict accountability upon all people. We can fool other people, we can fool our parents, we can fool ourselves. But we can't fool nature. If we sow nothing when we are young we have nothing to reap in later life. If we waste our physical resources when we are young we are

before we reach the middle point of life. A youth wasted spells a life wasted.

I said youth doesn't need much comment as far as its compensations are concerned, it has compensations enough. But middle age has its compensations too.

The greatest compensation of middle age, of course, and I don't know what middle age is today. It is really hard to say. From my knowledge of some of my friends I would put middle age as far up as the age of seventy. I have known men in the sixties, healthy, hearty, strong, alert, energetic as men a generation ago were at the age of forty. - the greatest compensation of middle age is the privilege of building a family and a home. That's the rarest of life's blessings. To enjoy the companionship of a life-mate, to bring children into the world, to have something of that divine satisfaction which God Himself must have had when He created this world. To be a co-creator with God, to be a

provider, protector, a counselor, a guide; to be able to fashion and to mold character, that's a compensation which comes with middle age - perhaps life's richest blessing.

Of course, that brings with it a load of responsibility. We are no longer as carefree in our middle age as we are when we are young. We are not foot-loose. We can't adventure as readily. And sometimes some of us in certain moments of our life, of our middle age, look back longingly on our youth. We hanker for our youth, the freedom which was ours, the fewer burdens which we had to carry. But upon second thought I doubt whether the middle-aged man would exchange places with the young man.

You will recall that very lovely poem of Oliver Wendell Holmes called "The Old Man Dreams."

"Oh for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth year."

He wants to be twenty again; to wipe out all the other years and bring you back to where you were at twenty. Is there anything that you would like to take along with you. He says he'll take his precious wife.

"The man would be a boy again
And be a husband too."

"I'll take my girl and boys.

The Man would be a boy again
And be a father too!"

Middle age is the age of rich experiences, ripening judgment, social recognition. The age when you begin to play your role in the world,- your role as citizen, as a member of the community.

In middle age we no longer fly from peak to peak as in youth, from one exaltation to another, breathless with eagerness. Our walk is a slower walk but a steadier walk. It is the age of finer discriminations. You are beginning to get your wisdom teeth. You are beginning to discriminate between pleasure on the one hand and happiness on the other, - between that which is visionary and that which is ideal; between the false glitter and the abiding light of life.

In youth you may be interested in lyric poetry. In middle age your interest becomes a little more scientific. You are interested in economics, politics, technology, sociology, international affairs. Your reading is likely to be of that character. Middle age is when a man makes his unique and specific contribution to society. If you have anything in you to give to your community, your country, to mankind, middle age is when you make that contribution to society.

And then comes old age.

Shakespeare, you will recall in his famous passage divides life into seven stages:

"All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail

Unwillingly to school. And then the lover
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

And yet Shakespeare, himself, I suspect knew that old age is not quite as helpless and not without its compensations, as all that. For immediately after this revelry of the cynical immediately following that, there enters upon the scene Adam, that old servitor of the play, who is four score years old, happy, hearty, enjoying his life, serving the world. Shakespeare in his remarkable dramatic gifts, his technique, gives the answer to the thing in the living person of this old man of eighty years.

Among our Jewish people, more so than among any other people in the world, age was remarkably revered. Our Bible and more particularly our Talmud, is replete with reference to the dignity and nobility of old age. "The judgment of the aged" said one of the rabbis, "is like old wine." (quote Hebrew) "That which old people desire is in reality a construction and an upbuilding." As between the prophet and the Aged, the aged comes first, according to our rabbis. The prophet needs

a proof that he is a prophet; the aged requires no proof. His numbered years point to a wisdom and a sanctity which are sufficient. No one could become a member of the Sanhedrin, the Governing Body, unless he was an old man, rich in the experiences of life.

Our Rabbis also defined the life of a man, as Shakespeare did in seven stages. They defined life in quite a number of stages. At five, they said, five years of age, that is the time for the beginning of the study of the Torah. Ten years is for the study of the Mishna. At thirteen, Bar Mitzwah, that's the beginning of the fulfillment of the commandments. That's when a young man becomes a full-fledged member of the community; takes upon himself the responsibility of

In the Orient men mature earlier than in our part of the world. At fifteen it is time for the study of the Talmud. Notice that from earliest infancy, from the age of five, children are put to study. At eighteen, that's the time for marrying. And wiser by far than our system under which we live, where young men are unable to be married until they are thirty or thirty-five. It is far more natural that young people should be married early in life and the wise parent would bestow the greatest blessing upon his children if he would make it possible for the son to marry early in life.

At twenty years it is time to begin to seek a career, to make a livelihood. At thirty man begins to enter into his full strength. At forty, one begins to understand a little of life. (Quote Hebrew)

At fifty, one is about ready for counsel, for advising others.

At sixty, old age begins to set in, but not the old age which breaks one mentally or physically. At seventy, the hoary head. At eighty one must enjoy the special gift of strength to reach eighty. At ninety, one begins to bend under the weight of the years. At one hundred, one is as if he were already dead.

And so up to seventy or eighty, according to our Rabbis, one could live his life purposefully, effectively.

The great poet Browning wisely made a Jewish Rabbi voice this conception of old age which is foreign to many another people, in his magnificent poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Browning makes this Rabbi say:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life,
For which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God,
See all, nor be afraid!"

Old age, my friends, brings with it a calmness of spirit, a detachment from the turmoil of life, the capacity to see life perhaps for the first time a bit objectively, dispassionately, no longer furiously, caught up in the business of ~~XXXX~~ pursuing ambition, pursuing wealth, without which you think life is meaningless. In old age we begin to have a more philosophic and calmer view of things, a more stoic view of things. Old age has this compensation only for those people who have laid up stores for their old age; who have invested during their middle age and their youth, so that intellectual dividends would be theirs in old age. The wise man

insures himself for his old age not only in a monetary way, but in an intellectual and spiritual way.

It is in old age that we can enjoy the friends that we made when we were young. Old age is the period of enjoyment for old friends and old books and well-remembered music. Old age is the period of harvesting, of enjoying the rich harvest of life. It is also the period of enjoying one's children and grand-children. And blessed is the man or the woman who has so reared their children that they are a comfort unto them in their old age.

Unfortunately that is not the case with all old folks. There are too many instances of what the great poet called "Unregarded age in corners thrown," - pushed aside, shifted.

The ideal family, as our people conceived of it, is not the one in which the old grand-father or grandmother or the old father and mother is shoved aside in corners thrown, - but in a sense the reverential in the home, the center of ripening wisdom, of counsel, the object of attention and love and respect. The old father becomes in the real home, the symbol of dignity and piety and sanctity.

In this age of speed and inquisitiveness and everybody so terrifically anxious to inquire, this age which is becoming so extremely selfish, we are in danger of making age despicable. In our industrial set-up a man who is forty is too old to work and therefore becomes an economic liability to his family. And when one becomes an economic liability he

becomes an emotional liability as well.

Much more respect was paid to age in the olden days than it is today.

And one of the compensations too, of old age, is that it can face not only life, with equanimity, with calmness, but even death. For the old have seen life, the complete cycle of it. They have known the spring, summer, autumn and winter. They have lived. They are ready to close the book of life "vixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna - pereji." "I have lived; whatever course fortune gave to me, I have pursued. I am without sorrow and without regret."

And blessed indeed are those aged who go down life's highway together, man and woman, life's helpmates and companions. Blessed are they indeed when they are able to enter the shadows together.

You recall that perfectly magnificent poem of Burns' "John Anderson My Jo, John."

"When we were first acquent
Your locks were like the raven
Your bonnie brow was brent:
But now your brow is bald, John
Your locks are like the snow:
But blessings on your frosty pow
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John
We clamb the hill together
And money a canty day, John
We've had wi one anither:
Now we mann tother down, John
But hand in hand we'll go
And sleep together at the foot
John Anderson, my jo.

Nature is kind and gives to each age of our mortal days cares or sorrows; to youth a fervour and a glow, a lift, a buoyancy; to middle age a steadfastness, keener judgments, finer discriminations, the privilege of home-building, the privilege of playing a role in the world, the privilege of experience; to old age, a peace, a calmness such as the twilight brings to the long long day.

When one is blessed and lives the full span of life, from dawn to dusk, when death comes, it is as if God came down from heaven to kiss one with the eternal sleep.



1. Each Stage - compensations - re-begin - Life has Seasons

2. Youth
- (1) Unbounded Hope - zest - haustations - Every obstacle - dreams - Ego - Road
 - (2) Bureaucracy - resilience - thaws - "Casebooks"
 - (3) Too engrossed - Adolescent pessimism - intellectual microscope - Enjoy warm Carding - "divine generalizations"
 - (4) Lyric poetry - "The Song & Songs"
 - (5) Idealizes life - Consummation - glow
 - (6) Enthusiasms - overlaps - reckless -
 - (7) Unshackled - stirred
 - (8) Protesters - Cruel
 - (8) Preparation - Spring - Foundations - Waste

3. Middle Age

- (1) Greatest compensation - Home & Family - Companionship - No Experience - franchising; Provider Co-Creator
- (2) Burial Weight & Responsibility - care-free - Hostages - Hauler - "Holmes" ✓
- (3) Age & Rich Experience - ripening - social recog. - role - citizens

(4) Fly from peak to peak - breathless - slower -
discrimination - Pleasure - Ideal - Light -
Interests largely - com.

(5) Make special contribution

4. Old Age

(1) Shakespeare - 7 ages - ~~Adams~~ ✓

(2) And yet Old Age - helpers - Compensations - Adams -

(3) Jewish thought -

(a) Judgment - Old wine

(b) פסוקים 112

(c) (12) 112 125

(d) דברים 112 - Sanhedrin

(4) Exodus 12 ✓ "Grow old" ✓

(5) Age brings calmness - Car of riches -

Detached - Stoicism - philosophic -

Laid up store -

(6) For children - "unyielded age in corners
thrown"

(7) Face Death. Vix, et quem dedit
cursum fortuna, peregi"

(8) John Anderson, my jo - ✓

ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS

THE COMPENSATIONS OF YOUTH, MIDDLE AGE AND OLD AGE

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
THE TEMPLE, JANUARY 11th, 1931.

Every stage of life has its compensations for each brings with it its own characteristic experiences and the opportunity of beginning a new life on a different plane. Each season of life has its peculiar grace and charm.

The greatest blessing of youth is its unbounden hope and buoyancy. Youth imagines that life has no limitations, that every obstacle is surmountable and every ambition attainable. Youth is too engrossed in living to be analytical of life.

The pessimism of adolescence is only a passing phase of a biologic adjustment. Youth's warm blood thaws every chill despair. Youth does not look at life under an intellectual microscope which reveals all of its coarse texture. It does not car an emotion into psychological shreds. It is still in the stage of divine generalization.

Youth idealizes life without falsifying it. It can still see the glow where others see only the ashes. Commonplaces are commonplaces only to commonplace people. Nothing is as yet commonplace to youth. Youth is capable of being stirred to generous acts and admirable loyalties. It may also be thoughtless and thoughtlessly cruel. It can be impulsively tyrannous. Youth must not exploit its elders and parents should not allow their children to exploit them.

The greatest compensation of middle age is the building of a

home and a family. No experience in life is as enriching and as ennobling as that of founding a family, and no satisfaction quite as profound as that of being protector, provider and guide in one's own home. Middle age is the period of ripening judgments and rich experiences, civic participation and social recognition. It brings with it finer discriminations and truer insight. In middle age we do not fly from peak to peak breathless with eagerness. Our walk is a slower but steadier pace.


Old age brings with it a calmer view of the world, a more detached attitude and a quiet stoicism. We are less energetic but more philosophic. In our old age we may enjoy the rich treasures of mind experience and human fellowship which we have laid up during our active years.

Our present age is not kind to old people. In a civilization which measures things by material profit and loss, old age is a liability. Older civilizations, especially our Hebraic civilization revered the hoary head, turned to old age for counsel and judgment and looked upon venerable age as the symbol of human dignity.

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players.
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
 Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
 In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
 His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Montague

- Age: 5. Study & Scripture
10. " " Mishna
13. Fulfillment of Commandments
15 Study, Talumud

18: Marriage
20. Seeking a career - livelihood
30. Entering into full strength
40. for Understanding.  2121
50 .. Counsel 251
60 Old age - 21751

70. Heavy load 221
80: Gift of Special strength 2111

90. Bends beneath weight of years 111
100 as if already dead.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
When we were first acquainted
Your looks were like the raven
Your bonnie brow was bent;
But now your brow is bald, John,
Your looks are like the snow;
But blessings on your frosty pow
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill together
And mung a canny day, John
We've had wi' aye anither:
Now we mairn totter down, John,
But hand in hand will go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God, see all, nor
be **afraid!**"



The Old man dreams Robert Lowell Holmes

~~He~~ O for whom of youthful joy!

Give back my 20th year!

He'll take his precious wife!

The man would be a boy again

And be a husband too

He'll take - my girl - and boys.

The man would be a boy again

And be a father too!



- (3) Age of ~~life~~ rich experience - ripening judgment
 of social recognition - playing a role -
 of ~~active~~ participation
 of ~~slow~~ slow realization of ambition -
- (4) We do not fly from peak to peak -
 breathless in our eagerness - A slower,
 starker pace.
- (5) Age of discrimination - bet. Pleasure and
 Happiness - Bet. the ideal & the visionary -
 bet. ~~the~~ the ideal by act - and the evanescent
 flitter - Our interests are Econ - social -
 technical - political - ~~intellectual~~
- (6) Age in which we make our specific
contribution to society -

3. Age.

- (1) Shake scene - 7 Ages -
~~(2) Whistle (12)~~
- (B+) And yet old age is not always & need not
 be quite as helpless & utterly without com-
 pensations: Shake. himself - Adam.
- (C) Jewish thought Exalted Old Age - more than
any other
people
- (1) Judgment of Aged - old wine
 (2) ישן קורא ויחיו ויבין
 (3) ישן ישן -
 (4) ישן ישן - Sanhedrin -

1. Nature is kind - Each stage has its compensation - ~~gently reminds~~
~~out the whole cycle of life~~ for we can ~~begin~~ ^{rebegin} to live at every
stage as a different level. Life has its seasons - as nature
has - and its seasons its peculiar grace and charm - and
its peculiar compensations -

2. Youth -

(1) Is blessed with unbounded hope - Hope in the zest of life
Has not yet learned life's limitations - I imagine every obstacle
unmountable - any and every attainable - dreams un-
hindered or unbroken by experience - The ego ~~is~~ ^{is not}
hemmed in by social restraints - Believes he can
follow any road he wishes - & if hard, possesses
the strength for the effort - ~~Youth is blessed with~~

(2) Youth is blessed with buoyancy - if defeated -
will be perpetually depressed for a moment - & the next
will be plunging on again - Characterized by thorough
resilience and elasticity - the warm blood ~~is~~
every chill despair - "Ceaseless striving" -

(3) Too engrossed in living to analyze life. The
critical eye - ~~(Has its advantages)~~ - adolescence - pessimism - only
a passing phase of physical adjustment - does
not see life under an intel. microscope - reveals
its coarse texture - Enjoys warm emotions

(5) born 12 - Mountain - 40 old - very far
(6) Browning - Jewish Tradition - from Ed -

"The Heyday in the blood is taken" but
(7) Age brings with it a calmer view of
can riches - power - ambition

detached - a quiet Stoicism as

(8) Philanthropic view of life. ^{we can pass in old} ^{as in duty} ^{Counsel}
day - ^{Land up Street} ^{we can pass in old} ^{as in duty} ^{Counsel}
quietude & peace - old friends, old

books - ~~but~~ and see life pass by
without sorrow - or regret - having
lived - seen the whole cycle -

✓ "Vixi - et quæ dederat cursum
fortuna - peregi"

(F.) And if blessed with life's companions -
- John Anderson, my Jo, John -

"unregarded as in corners then"

without casting them into psychoanaly. sheds —
It is still in the stage of "divine generalization"
(4) Use of poetry — Every age has its poetry — ^{meaning} But
diff. types — But growth ~~has~~ is the age of love, roman-
tic, pure emot. poetry — "The Song of Songs" —

(5) Youth idealizes life. That does not mean that it makes life unreal. ^{"fantasy"} ~~life~~ is what we make it - youth makes it ideal - a grand, budding & blossoming. ~~It is~~ as perhaps - it was meant to be in the Creator's mind. Commonplaces are common places to commonplace people - youth finds a glow where others see only dust. -

(6) Faith has cathartics, - wraps mountains -
our crash in to faith - But other actually
are carried over by their authors - They are
vellers, headlong, precipitate - but think / the
int-relationships which come with a complete
whole-hearted act from refused abandon -

(7) Youth has spirit of adventure - ~~could be before~~
them awaiting their discovery. ~~Something of the spirit~~
of and for earnest adventure without risks
and dangers -

(8) Youth is still unstepped - unprobed - channelled
- May be turned to great idealism + sacrifice -

admirable by acts - generous acts -

- (10) Period of Preparation. It is 1 year - you plan the fields - you sow the seeds - Everywhere there is a stirring and a life-ferment - Sap & life creep up warm & sweet - Age & laying foundations for future life - ^{phys. training} sound studies - good habits, thought & actions - friendships -
- A youth wasted, or too early settled, spells a life wasted and stuffy -

- (9) Youth may be thrilled - thoughtless & cruel - impulsive and tyrannical - Youth must not exploit - & parent must not allow children to exploit them.

3. Middle Age - 25-55 or 60.

- (1) Greatest compensation is career Home & Family. One enjoys companionship of life-mate and children - No experience as governing and enjoying as that of providing a family - One feels the profound satisfaction of provider - protector and guide - Co-creator with God & Jesus of life & character.
- (2) Things were at your disposal - but as car-free as in youth - ^{Hostages to fortune} most walk were cautiously planned more practically - One cannot is not quite a adventurer - But other compensations ^{Handling of freedom} Attitudes -